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NEAR EAST-SOUTH ASIA: REGIME RESPONSES TO
ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST DEMANDS [REDACTED]

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Summary

Many regimes in the Near East and South Asia have responded to the rise in Islamic fundamentalism by sanctioning a more orthodox practice of Islam while, at the same time, increasing security measures against the fundamentalist threat. Several nations have reintroduced Shariah laws and tightened restrictions on non-Muslim religious practice as part of their attempt to placate the fundamentalists. Security measures have included strengthened domestic intelligence collection, repression of antiregime fundamentalist groups, and international security cooperation, especially among the Gulf oil states. Governments will continue to mix carrot and stick policies as they grapple with ways to satisfy the demands of the fundamentalists without threatening internal stability. [REDACTED]

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Many governments also will continue to include an anti-US element in their policy mix, in part to appease the fundamentalists. They will strive to distance themselves from US foreign policies and to limit military cooperation with the United States. The Gulf states, however, are currently muting their criticism of the United States as they concentrate on the threat from Iran. [REDACTED]

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This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED] Regional Issues Branch, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 6 July was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, South Asia Division, [REDACTED]

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Most Near East and South Asian governments, caught unaware by the swiftness and ferocity of the Iranian revolution and subsequent efforts to export it, initially made accommodations to the fundamentalists. More recently, however, they have mixed their policies of accommodation with tough and sometimes unpopular measures against them. [REDACTED]

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The varying responses to fundamentalist movements reflect the variety of political environments in which they currently thrive. Presidents Zia of Pakistan and Nimeiri of Sudan have wrapped themselves in the mantle of Islam, claiming direct revelations from Allah for guidance in governing society. King Hussein of Jordan and King Hassan of Morocco, relying on their authority as descendents of the Prophet Muhammad, have sought to discredit fundamentalists and to tarbrush Iranian-trained youth as "fanatics." [REDACTED]

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In states where the leaders have neither adopted the role of "born again" Muslims nor claim bloodlines from the Prophet, we believe the fundamentalist challenge is more dangerous. Gulf shaykhdom rulers have a form of legitimacy because their families have ruled for centuries but are under challenge from fundamentalists for their allegedly un-Islamic policies and lifestyles. Leaders in Syria and Iraq are ruthless and clever secular figures who seized, rather than inherited, power; Egypt's Mubarak succeeded to political rule because of an assassin's bullet; Libya's Qadhafi seized control in a swift military coup and then justified a restructuring of society along quasi-Islamic lines. [REDACTED]

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Greater Orthodoxy Sanctioned

All governments of predominantly Muslim nations in the region, with the exception of Ba'thist Syria and Iraq, have adopted some or all of the following measures in efforts to appease the fundamentalists:

- Increased consultation with the clergy and religious scholars.
- Constructed more mosques and Islamic schools.
- Scheduled more religious programming on television.
- Sponsored Koranic conferences and trips to Mecca.
- Cracked down on behavior linked to Western permissiveness, including bans on or limitations on access to alcohol and "immoral" Western-produced films and literature.
- Established more segregation of the sexes and required more modest dress by women. [REDACTED]

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Return to Shariah Law

Although some of the regimes of the region, in response to fundamentalist demands, have adopted the Shariah to either replace or supplement Western civil codes and tax laws, the difficulty of adapting a legal code originating in the seventh century to today's problems has produced half-hearted rhetorical reforms and decrees that have gone unimplemented, especially in the field of corporal punishment. Rulers such as Zia, Nimeiri, and the Amir of Kuwait are discovering that application of Shariah law bedevils relationships between them, their citizens, and their non-Islamic neighbors; rigidly interpreted Islam, rapid modernization, and practical politics all come into the inevitable conflict. [REDACTED]

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Discrimination Against Non-Muslims

Throughout the region, the renewal of orthodox Islamic practices has made the position of non-Muslim minorities more precarious. Fundamentalist criticism of other religious and social practices has led to discriminatory government-sanctioned behavior, ranging from minor harassment to persecution:

- Christian expatriates working in some Gulf states are being denied places of worship. In Saudi Arabia, for example, private Christian services are sometimes interrupted by Muslim religious police.
- In Egypt, the Coptic Pope Shenuda has been under house arrest since September 1981.
- In Iran, several hundred Bahais have been executed as unrepentent heretics.
- In Pakistan, the Ahmadis (a small breakaway Muslim sect) are being subjected to a wave of harassment.

Increased Repression and Security Measures

Many regimes that have adopted policies to placate the fundamentalists but that have still experienced problems with them, have turned to more severe measures, including repression and strengthened security measures:

- Individual rights are restricted.
- House arrests and trials in camera are increasing.
- Bans on student organizations, which tend to be dominated by fundamentalists, are widespread.
- Demonstrations are frequently broken up and agitators quickly jailed.

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- Investigations of suspected fundamentalists are becoming more rigorous and wiretapping and mail monitoring are increasing.
- Pamphleteers are given harsh prison sentences, and censorship boards are springing up in previously lax societies. [REDACTED]

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These authoritarian measures have reinforced the grievances of the militant fundamentalist groups, particularly where sectarian, tribal, or ethnic animosities compound their sense of injustice. In the process, human rights abuses are increasing.

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Virtually all states have upgraded and increased their capability to monitor fundamentalist groups, whether the groups meet clandestinely or with government permission. Events such as the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the assassination of Sadat, the Iranian-backed coup attempt in Bahrain, and the bombing of the US embassies in Beirut and Kuwait have led to revamped security forces and practices. The Iran-Iraq war provided a further impetus to enlarge small, sometimes outmoded, security services and to emphasize such security measures as baggage inspection, expulsion of undesirable individuals, licensing of social gatherings, wiretapping, and mail monitoring. Middle East governments are also sharing information and plans through the Gulf Cooperative Council. [REDACTED]

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The security services, formerly concentrating on surveillance of leftist groups, now are focusing on destabilization from the right, particularly from Islamic fundamentalists [REDACTED]. In Tunisia, the government blamed the bread riots last January on "fundamentalist subversion"; in the Gulf shaykhdoms, Shia communities are under suspicion, and the government is attempting to infiltrate ranks and recruit informers in the hunt for militant fundamentalists; in Oman, Egyptian teachers have been fired because of alleged links with the Muslim Brotherhood. [REDACTED]

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Security services are finding the fundamentalist opposition difficult to penetrate, however, partly because the mosque and associated religious activities are integral parts of the social framework of Muslim countries. Security organizations must balance carefully the benefits of uprooting radical cells against offending the cultural and religious sensitivities of the masses. [REDACTED]

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Playing to Anti-US Sentiment: Implications for the United States

Muslim leaders, including those friendly to the United States such as Hussein, Zia, and King Fahd, have all found that condemning policies of the United States plays well with

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[redacted]

fundamentalist audiences. This has given added impetus to their criticism of US support for Israel and US inability to mediate effectively in Lebanon. Although the Gulf states have recently muted their criticism of the United States as a result of the stepped-up Iran-Iraq war, their fear of fundamentalist reaction has contributed to a resistance to formal bilateral cooperation on military contingency planning in the Gulf and a refusal to host US Rapid Deployment forces. [redacted]

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We believe that hostility to US foreign policies will continue to be a popular tool of regional governments to appease the fundamentalists. Moreover, reintroduction of Shariah law in countries such as Sudan and Pakistan, where the leadership has accepted it as state policy, will work against US interests in maintaining standards of human rights and probably will complicate the advancement of US commercial interests. Finally, any increase in fundamentalist representation in the governments will almost certainly have a negative impact on US policy. Hussein's admission of fundamentalists to the Jordanian Parliament, for example, will hinder his participation in the Middle East peace process. [redacted]

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Outlook

We expect the governments of the Near East-South Asia region to attain mixed results in their efforts to balance policies that will appease the fundamentalists on the one hand but stop short of offending the more moderate majorities on the other. We believe that the fundamentalists will become more militant and radical as regimes, striving to meet the demands of both fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist constituencies, satisfy neither. [redacted]

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Apart from the Gulf states, we expect most regimes to be reluctant to agree to fundamentalist demands for greater orthodoxy because they believe that acquiescence could threaten their control. In the Gulf states, we believe that greater emphasis on orthodoxy will be less controversial and more successful in meeting fundamentalist demands because orthodoxy has long been a part of the political process. We also expect security measures to receive the greatest emphasis in the Gulf states although those with substantial Shia populations--Bahrain and Kuwait--still face the greatest risk of fundamentalist-inspired instability. [redacted]

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Repressive measures and intolerance of non-Muslim minorities will continue to exacerbate sectarian tensions. Conflicts are most likely in those countries that already have policies that discriminate against minority groups--Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Egypt. [redacted]

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SELECTED NEAR EAST-SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES:
REGIME RESPONSES TO ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM*

Country	Greater Orthodoxy Sanctioned	Return to Shariah Law	Discrimination Against Non-Muslims and Minority Sects	Increased Repression & Security Measures	Playing to Anti-US Sentiment
Algeria	No official change in secular policies, but government is reinforcing its Islamic credentials.	Secular law remains basis of judicial system.	Tolerant of all religions.	Government is prepared to deal harshly with militant fundamentalist groups; 83 fundamentalists were arrested and convicted of civil agitation in 1983.	Improved ties with the United States.
Bahrain	Both popular and official reinforcement of piety; limited ban on liquor; other cosmetic measures.	No indication of any debate.	Definite increase in suspicion of large Shia community.	Dramatically upgraded; opposition penetrated.	Some official criticism of US Middle East policies.
Bangladesh	Official stress on "establishment" Islam; President Ershad stresses personal piety.	Not stressed; secular law retained.	Minor anti-Christian warnings tempered by need for Western financial assistance.	Martial law, implemented in 1982, still in effect; increased surveillance of all opposition groups; monitoring of fundamentalists increased substantially.	Officially and publicly friendly.

*Several countries have been excluded from this listing: the five states populated mostly by non-Muslims (India, Israel, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan); Afghanistan; Iran; Lebanon; South Yemen; and Western Sahara.

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Country	Greater Orthodoxy Sanctioned	Return to Shariah Law	Discrimination Against Non-Muslims and Minority Sects	Increased Repression & Security Measures	Playing to Anti-US Sentiment
Egypt	Cosmetic measures such as mosque building; Mubarak emphasizes traditional and modest life style.	Constitutionally, Shariah is source of legislation.	Continued government discrimination against Copts.	Liberalization measures (such as new political parties, including Muslim Brotherhood) have been balanced by retention of Emergency Law; internal security has become more rigorous and efficient since Sadat's assassination; government has initiated removal of fundamentalists from military ranks.	Officially, still close ties with United States.
Iraq	Ba'thist government is secular although leaders have made token gestures of piety.	Ba'thist government will not advocate such a measure.	Sunni-dominated government is officially tolerant.	High level of repression; those suspected of disloyalty are imprisoned or executed; war with Iran has accelerated the strengthening of the already formidable internal security system.	Baghdad still resists reestablishment of formal ties with US, although much less critical of US than before.
Jordan	King Hussein emphasizes his "piety" and Islamic credentials; sponsors "establishment orthodoxy."	Shariah already shares minor role with civil law; no change.	Although government is officially tolerant and non-Muslims are not discriminated against, Christian minority is worried.	Slight liberalization of moderate martial law by reopening of parliament; internal security has been increased, but because of threats from Syrians and Palestinians, not fundamentalists.	Officially and popularly growing because of US Middle East policies.
Kuwait	Intensification of conservatism; ban on alcohol; popular piety.	Demands for making Shariah sole source of law, led by fundamentalists, now in legislative assembly debate.	Increasing restriction of foreigners practicing non-Muslim religion; anti-Shia sentiment on rise.	Society still fairly open; surveillance upgraded; many Shias purged from key government positions since December 1983 bombings; deportation of suspect Iranian origin Shias.	Standard criticism of US Middle East policies.

Country	Greater Orthodoxy Sanctioned	Return to Shariah Law	Discrimination Against Non-Muslims and Minority Sects	Increased Repression & Security Measures	Playing to Anti-US Sentiment
Libya	Islamic themes incorporated in Qadhafi's ideology, but are interpreted in a modernist rather than orthodox fashion.	Trend is toward greater radicalism and less traditionalism in law and policy.	No permanent non-Muslim minorities in Libya since Qadhafi expelled them in 1970. Minority Muslim sects officially tolerated.	Islamic fundamentalists have been singled out in press as reactionary opponents of regime; many may have been arrested along with other suspected dissidents in wake of 8 May assassination attempt on Qadhafi; assassination attempt resulted in mass arrests, executions, and shake-up in armed forces, but not aimed at fundamentalist threat alone.	Qadhafi's anti-US stance unrelated to fundamentalist pressure, although statements on US presence in Lebanon couched in Christian "crusaders" versus Muslims terms.
Mauritania	Already conservative.	Returned to Shariah law last year.	Officially and unofficially tolerant.	Some arrests of fundamentalist activists; moderate moves to strengthen security.	No significant anti-US statements or policies.
Morocco	"Establishment Islam" has been reinforced; token gestures have been made to Ulema.	Already shares minor role with civil law. No change.	Officially tolerant but Bahais are still on trial for proselytizing; Christians are being investigated for proselytizing.	Slight tightening of thousands of fundamentalist youth were jailed in early 1984; many still awaiting trial.	No significant anti-US statements or policies by government.
North Yemen	Increased official observance of religious events.	General Salih states that Shariah is the basis of the State.	Officially and unofficially tolerant.	Some arrests of fundamentalist activists; regime has bolstered security services.	Critical of US pro-Israel and pro-Saudi policies.
Oman	Government stresses Islamic and Arab themes; beginning to enforce modest dress code for foreign women.	No change.	Tolerant of Islamic differences (Omanis are Ibadhi Muslims, a minority sect) but caution non-Muslims on public religious practices.	Security services monitor small Shia and expatriate communities but no sign of heightened restrictions.	Government trying to downplay security links to United States by improving ties with Arab neighbors and advocating Islamic themes.

Country	Greater Orthodoxy Sanctioned	Return to Shariah Law	Discrimination Against Non-Muslims and Minority Sects	Increased Repression & Security Measures	Playing to Anti-US Sentiment
Pakistan	Increased stress on orthodoxy under Zia's Islamization policies.	Moving towards more strict interpretation of Shariah in legal code.	Intense sectarian hostility-- persecution of Ahmadi sect as heretical; discrimination against Christians.	Heightened, particularly to detect and defuse sectarian tensions; increased implementation of martial law; student organizations banned.	No significant anti-US statements or policies by government.
Qatar	Already conservative.	No official discussion of such a move.	Officially and unofficially tolerant.	No significant repressive measures; security still fairly lax.	No significant anti-US statements or policies.
Saudi Arabia	Strictness of observance of orthodox customs has increased; leaders have stressed their piety.	Shariah is already basis of legal system.	Rigid rules against public practice of other religions.	Sectarian repression of Shia minority has increased; internal police surveillance and arrests increasing.	Despite close ties with United States, Riyadh has downplayed relationship.
Sudan	Government is moving beyond orthodoxy to officially sanctioned fundamentalism; may become Islamic state.	Government is now implementing the Shariah, including hudud (anticriminal) measures.	Civil war with the Christian and animist south continues; secularists among government elite have been fired; civil liberties of non-Muslims increasingly violated; had hands severed and suffered other punishments.	Dramatic increase in repressive measures; state of emergency recently decreed; internal security increased to detect non-fundamentalist sentiments.	None officially; among southerners, sharp criticism because US supports regime.

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Country	Greater Orthodoxy Sanctioned	Return to Shariah Law.	Discrimination Against Non-Muslims and Minority Sects	Increased Repression & Security Measures	Playing to Anti-US Sentiment
Syria	Ba'thist government retains secular ideology although it uses some Islamic rhetoric.	Ba'thist government will not advocate use of Shariah.	More tolerant of other faiths than most Middle East countries; sectarian tension continues between Alawites, who dominate government, and Sunnis.	Repression has been intensified and highly developed internal security apparatus has been expanded since uprising in Hama was crushed in 1982.	Criticism of US foreign policy, particularly ties with Israel, remains high.
Tunisia	Secular government will not return to orthodoxy as long as Bourguiba lives.	No known public discussion.	Official tolerance, but some popular discrimination against Christian and Jewish minorities.	Many fundamentalist activists have been imprisoned but some are now being released; January 1984 bread riots has promoted efforts to strengthen security apparatus but not related directly to fundamentalist threat.	Government is tolerating increased criticism of US policies.
UAE	Intensification of already conservative Islam.	Secular law remains basis of judicial system.	Officially tolerant.	Internal security has been beefed up drastically to counter Iranian influence.	Standard criticism of US Middle East policies.

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SUBJECT: Near East-South Asia: Regime Responses to Islamic
Fundamentalist Demands

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